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ABSTRACT

Programs must be designed to remove barriers to equitable vocational education. Barriers to such programs are erosion of public and special interest group confidence in the educational system; lack of systematic student services; and lack of mutual awareness, communication, and cooperation between vocational and general educators. To remove barriers, adequate funds must be available to distribute by efficient methods. Local involvement and endorsement are also required. Vocational educators must work with parents and family members who influence career decisions to change attitudes toward vocational education. Career assessments are a practical strategy to recognize interests and aptitudes. Vocational education linkages with federal agencies could help coordinate efforts. Accessibility in rural areas could be increased by school districts' cooperation. Additional funds would ensure more programs, vocational counseling, and access to health and social services. Research and development strategies for elimination should focus on new program designs, competency-based modular instruction, basic skills development, and work experience. Successful removal of barriers to equity relies on focusing awareness on problems of inequity, providing corrective pre- and inservice personnel education, refining the curriculum, developing innovative teaching/learning materials and techniques, providing vocational guidance services, implementing career education, providing necessary facilities and equipment, and adequate funding. (YLB)

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Research and Development Series No. 214A

# EQUITY FROM A VOCATIONAL DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR'S PERSPECTIVE

by

**Richard N. Adams**

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR RESEARCH IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

**SUMMARY** Vocational educators have grappled with equity as a problem and have espoused it as a cause since 1963 when Congress issued both an equity mandate and an equity challenge with the passage of the Vocational Education Act. This paper is one of seventeen reports commissioned by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education to meet the equity challenge through a multidisciplinary approach encompassing three perspectives—academic, vocational education, and special interest group advocacy.

The following paper views equity from the perspective of an administrator of a vocational education center serving rural high school and adult students. It addresses issues, problems, and pragmatic concerns of achieving equity at the local level. Examples of topics discussed are: accessibility in a rural area, funding, counselor training, career education, provision of health and human services, and competency-based modular instructional packages. Recommendations include local commitment to and involvement in vocational education programs, and greater communication among parents, students, vocational educators, employers, and community groups.

As a superintendent of an area vocational center located in west central Ohio, the author provides the overall leadership for programming that is designed to meet the job-training needs of rural and suburban high school students, as well as adults residing within the geographic area served by the school. The instructional facilities are operated twelve hours daily, six days each week, on an annual basis. It is the superintendent's responsibility to serve as the chief executive officer of the eleven-member board of education and as instructional leader of a staff totaling over two hundred full-time and part-time persons. In addition, a major task of the office is to maintain two-way communications with area employers, school advisory committee members, appropriate community agency personnel, and

residents of the area served by the school. Other important responsibilities are to manage the fiscal activities, ensure compliance with the various laws and regulations, provide for program development and revision, represent the school in a variety of organizations, and conduct vocational education efficiently and economically. As a practicing vocational education district administrator, the author has experienced increasing concern regarding the provision of vocational education on an equitable basis to all of the persons needing preparation for employment at the vocational level.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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## EQUITY CONCERNS OF AN AREA VOCATIONAL CENTER ADMINISTRATOR

It is difficult to address one area of inequity in job training and placement without giving attention to others as well. Consequently, it is important to consider the disadvantaged, handicapped individuals, limited English-speaking persons, racial and ethnic minorities, females, and older individuals who experience barriers to preparation for, and employment in occupations of their selection. The public school systems were designed and intended to serve all Americans as they prepare to lead productive lives. Efforts must be successful to give schools the means for all persons to achieve social and economic improvement.

## VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PREREQUISITES

There are several major prerequisites to any programs designed to remove barriers to equitable job training and placement. Prior to receiving vocational education instruction, potential students must have (1) developed an adequate ability level in computing and reading, (2) had career education, career assessment, and vocational counseling made available to them, and in some cases, must have (3) received medical attention to correct existing impediments to learning.

## BARRIERS TO EQUITABLE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Erosion of public and special interest group confidence in the educational system is another major concern of area vocational center administrators. These groups do not believe that educators are able to solve the problem of inequity in job training and placement. Of even greater concern is the belief many individuals hold that educators and the educational system are themselves part of the problem. It is unfortunate and a major concern to area vocational center administrators that student services frequently are not provided in a systematic fashion. Since these services should be provided early in the students' instructional program, the vocational administrator cannot directly correct the situation. Unless an awareness of the capabilities of the educational system and personnel can be developed (in some situations preceded by program improvement) legislators may decide to invest funds in, and give training responsibility to agencies or institutions *outside* of education. Educators must be responsive to the needs of all students to prevent the

wasteful duplication of facilities, programming, and personnel that would result from dual systems.

It should be noted that many persons employed in general education and college preparatory programs are not supportive of vocational education as an acceptable alternative to their programs. There is often a lack of mutual awareness, communication, and cooperation between vocational educators and general educators, making it difficult to gain public confidence in the vocational education system. Programs of basic skills related to the teaching of employment skills enable students to progress in school, prepare for a job, and develop the personal characteristics expected by society.

## PROGRAM FUNDING AND ITS EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION

The availability of adequate funds and methods of distribution are important concerns. With a fixed amount of funds it is necessary to distribute the money in a manner that will encourage schools with a poor record of providing vocational education on an equitable basis, but will at the same time not discourage school districts that are improving or perhaps already conducting job training and placement on an equitable basis. The operational funds distribution system could be designed to pressure school districts into legal compliance. Equating funding with the provision of equity is a powerful formula, but this procedure will not of itself provide the resources needed to encourage program development geared toward serving the persons who have experienced barriers to job training and placement. The major questions are how institutions that have promoted equity and have gone beyond nondiscrimination by instituting change can be given positive reinforcement, rewarded, and how schools that have not incorporated strategies for eliminating barriers to equity in institutional program planninq can be encouraged to change.

Open enrollment is a very worthwhile goal; however, it may need to be tempered by what is practical and attainable. Physically barrier-free environments for the handicapped and for those elderly students who may have a physically disabling condition may require sizeable capital investment, especially in educational facilities. Even modifications to provide program access at a minimum level of compliance would be expensive. Under current economic conditions, many school administrators encounter problems in even maintaining existing educational facilities. Additional funds generated from state or federal sources would be required for such barrier-free environments. Furthermore, a decision is required

that sets forth the acceptable level of accessibility. How much should be invested to correct a situation that will affect only one person or even a few individuals becomes an administrative problem when those same funds could be used for the purchase of new equipment which would benefit many people.

A concern that has financial implications is the degree to which the school system is responsible for eliminating barriers to equity in vocational education. It is certainly agreed that employment is everyone's business and that everybody benefits from full employment. There is also no doubt that individuals who have not prepared for jobs because of equity barriers constitute an untapped economic resource waiting to be developed. The amount to be invested and the proration of the investment among the responsible parties, however, is a major problem in providing equity for handicapped individuals. Financial responsibility differs from state to state and even within a state. Furthermore, federal officials, state employees, local school personnel, and parents may disagree on what constitutes an appropriate education. The school is not, nor does it want to be the source of all social services. Yet many parents of handicapped students insist not only upon educational services, but also custodial care for their children. Decisions should be made as to the extent of responsibility the school system has for providing these related services. If residential care is to be included, significant increases in expenditures will result. Delineation of parental and school roles should also be clarified.

## NEED FOR LOCAL INPUT INTO NATIONAL POLICIES

Most boards of education are insistent upon local control of education. Board members prepare and adopt educational philosophies and policy with input from school employees. The goal is to deliver the education program desired by the community. For any program to be successful it is necessary to have local enthusiasm and support. If barriers to equity in vocational education and job placement are to be removed, local involvement and endorsement are required. Consequently, a concern to be considered is the identification of individuals who will form policy, develop plans, monitor operation and evaluate the results of vocational education. The implementation of a national policy for equity in vocational education must include a method of generating state and local involvement with commitment.

## BARRIERS TO EQUITABLE JOB TRAINING AND PLACEMENT AND POSSIBLE STRATEGIES FOR ELIMINATION

Family and personal attitudes can increase the difficulty of identifying and attracting to vocational education those youths and adults who need special educational assistance. The self-concept of the handicapped or disadvantaged individual may not be positive. Family members sometimes reinforce these negative feelings because of a desire to protect these individuals from additional frustration. Misinformation and lack of information are often responsible for parental misapprehension and resultant student indifference to vocational education opportunities.

The vocational educator cannot ignore the influence that family and peers have on the handicapped or disadvantaged student who may be interested in, or need vocational education. Vocational educators will need to work with parents and family members who influence career decisions of potential students. Most young people learn their values, attitudes, and even occupational goals from their parents. Many parents perform a constructive service to their children. For those who do not, however, it becomes necessary for school personnel to establish contact and provide factual information for parent and student.

In some black families, parents will discourage their children from taking vocational education. In many black communities, influential leaders will likewise discourage black youths and adults from enrolling in vocational education. Much of this tendency to discourage on the part of blacks stems from their lifelong experience of being relegated to nonprofessional and nontechnical jobs. As a consequence, blacks lack an understanding of what completion of a vocational education program can do for their children in terms of excellent job opportunities. Many of these parents along with uninformed white parents, have the erroneous notion that a college degree is the only route to affluence and influence. Parents with this viewpoint often place undue and excessive pressure on their children to attend college without any serious consideration of the youngster's abilities, aptitudes, or aspirations.

The vocational educator should organize meetings with key black community leaders to seek their advice in doing a better job of communicating with the black community. Speakers from the vocational school should arrange to be invited by black organizations and churches to present informative programs. Advisory committees should include representatives of the black community. It is important

for vocational school administrators to seek out qualified black persons for administrative, teaching, counseling, and support staff positions. These strategies will help demonstrate to black parents and black students the desire of vocational school personnel to be responsive to their job training needs.

Parents seemingly continue to remain conservative about careers for female children. There is, however, increasing public awareness that women should be able to prepare for any career they select. There are many reasons for increased awareness of the availability of nontraditional jobs for women, perhaps the most important of which is economic. It appears that economic considerations can be used to minimize the traditional negative influence of parents and society on females contemplating preparation for a nontraditional job. Regardless of the level of success already achieved in the area of female preparation for and placement in an occupation, however, there is a continuation of many barriers to equitable training and employment for women.

A career assessment profile of those individuals who have experienced barriers to equity is one very practical strategy in eliminating the barriers. This process helps to identify occupations for which the individuals have interest and aptitude. It provides a means to inventory what has been achieved, what is desired, and what must be done to prepare for work. This process is especially valuable for the handicapped and disadvantaged. The results of such an assessment assist males or females considering enrollment in a nontraditional occupational program. Results from the assessment are also helpful to the vocational administrator in developing programs, identifying program barriers, and refining the curriculum.

Career assessment centers are being established in some vocational schools, but to date, this service is not widely available. These centers are a valuable tool in helping both the counselor and the student to recognize the individual's vocational interests and aptitudes prior to selecting a vocational program. The career center can also assist those who are underemployed in upgrading their employment skills. Selection of a vocational program and prediction of success on the job are greatly enhanced through the help of a competent counselor in a career assessment center. The centers are an effective method of obtaining optimum utilization of vocational funds.

As new and emerging occupations occur, it becomes necessary for vocational educators to anticipate and develop instructional programs. These new programs, along with existing instructional areas, must be equally available to males and females. Exploratory sessions can be scheduled for potential vocational students to

provide an opportunity to experience some hands-on situations. The vocational school with a variety of laboratories is the ideal setting for career exploration. The same format should be implemented for orienting guidance counselors, teachers, and administrators to increase their awareness of equity in career selection.

Educators and students must realize that both sexes should feel comfortable in pursuing the education necessary for the occupation of their choice. Persons influencing career selection should encourage the self-esteem of the students. Teachers must be recruited who are technically competent and supportive of all students in their selection of careers.

The concern in recent years for eliminating barriers to job training and placement has been accompanied by competition among the agencies responsible for helping persons encountering equity problems. Federal agencies have enforced regulations concerning equity on an irregular basis with little cooperation or even exchange of information among the responsible federal agencies. Supportive and supplemental services of the various agencies must be linked with vocational education programs. A direct advantage of this linkage would be the avoidance of duplication. There should be continuous communication and coordination of efforts. There is a need to remove professional and political barriers if there is to be successful removal of equity barriers.

The geographic area to be served may present a major barrier and cause significant institutional problems. In rural and even some suburban areas there are substantial numbers of persons to be served who may have experienced barriers to job training and placement. Yet such individuals may be few in comparison to those located in urban areas. This situation presents several challenges to the persons responsible for developing and conducting programs of instruction. Mainstreaming of the handicapped can become a necessity, regardless of the validity of the practice, because it is the only financially feasible way to operate. The number of clients with common needs to be served may be so few that the responsible persons, however dedicated in purpose, may question the necessary allocation of resources. In a period of increasingly scarce funds, the money to support small classes of nonEnglish-speaking students, or to provide special services to help the disadvantaged to complete vocational education programs successfully may not be easily found.

A possible solution is to have cooperation among neighboring school districts in sparsely populated areas. The distance to be traveled and institutional cooperation are serious constraints. Many of the rural and suburban school districts

are characterized by being independent and conservative. There are strong provincial feelings that may prevent or decrease the potential for cooperative arrangements featuring sharing of students, staff members, equipment, and facilities. Most of these small districts want to maintain individual identity and resist outside efforts to consolidate students or services. The rural and suburban areas present special and unique logistic problems in eliminating barriers. The individuals residing there, however, although fewer in population, represent a major group needing services.

The absence of appropriate programs and special services for special populations represents a major barrier. These omissions are due in large measure to a scarcity of funds. The availability of funds for educational enterprises has been barely adequate. The public, as providers of school dollars by tax levies, has demonstrated a propensity for approving funds only for those programs they do not consider frivolous. The local electorate has shown resistance to financing programs with national or even state objectives. Programs designed for disadvantaged or handicapped persons, moreover, are usually more expensive than regular vocational education programs.

Additional funds could provide the incentive for the elimination of barriers and stimulate the creation of a climate for equity. With the constant shortage of funds, however, it appears that the development of a strategy will have to be accomplished with limited resources. Persons with responsibility for vocational education leadership will need to design programs and services in cooperation with those independent groups or organizations that can contribute in meaningful ways, rather than expect the various levels of government to provide additional money. An incentive program for employers to assist the schools in the training of individuals should be provided as a means to promote cooperation and coordination. In these ways, job training would become the shared responsibility of employers and vocational educators to an even greater extent than it currently is.

With limited resources, it is necessary to determine whether all groups (disadvantaged, handicapped, limited English-speaking, racial and ethnic minorities, females and older persons) experiencing barriers to vocational education and job placement are affected to the same degree. The determination of the degree to which one group experiences a lack of access to job training and placement compared to another group is dependent upon the perspective of the individual who is making the determination. Each group has needs and advocates. The advocates frequently do not cooperate to the fullest extent possible, which results in great difficulty for decision makers attempting to identify priorities for funding purposes. If successful determination of group priorities is not probable, perhaps

attention should be given to establishing a priority of functions that could be provided to all groups. An example would be to provide career education and assessment for all groups experiencing equity barriers. The provision of this service would promote some reduction of problems and some equalization of programming for all of the groups. Other services would be added with the procurement of additional funds.

All solutions to the elimination of barriers can be classified as programs to prevent or to treat the problem. Continued emphasis on treating the problem without attention to prevention is not acceptable. It appears, therefore, that a dual financial effort is needed to develop a viable solution. By implementing preventive programs while increasing the effort to treat the problem, vocational educators could bring a difficult situation under control.

The general lack of vocational counseling and related services is also related to the availability of funds. Individual differences in ability, potential, and aspirations are present within all groups of people. However, the more unique the individual, the greater the need of unique counseling services. It has been a relatively recent development that counselors have assumed some of the responsibility for occupational counseling as well as college preparatory counseling. Motivation of counselors and improvement of their methodology are necessary prior to any reasonable return in the form of appropriate counseling of disadvantaged and handicapped persons.

The vocational administrator must assume the responsibility for directing guidance counselors to the information required for successful counseling of potential vocational students. Seminars can be designed that provide practical information and alert counselors to the need for equity in access to job training programs. Field trips to industries and other places of employment will increase the effectiveness of the counselors. Scheduling a panel of employers to discuss the importance of coordination between the vocational school and the business community will promote a greater awareness in counselors of the job opportunities available.

There are several counseling-related services that are not available to the general clientele of vocational educators. It is realistic to assume that what is provided on a limited basis to students in general is not available to persons with special needs. One service lacking in scope is that of career education. The inability to select a career consistent with the individual's aspirations, interests, and aptitude is a serious impediment to preparing for a productive, meaningful life.

Career education is important for all students, but it is absolutely necessary for persons who have experienced inequity in the vocational education system. The lack of career education in all school districts is a serious barrier to equity in vocational education and job placement. The paucity of career education must be corrected if disadvantaged youths are to develop a positive self-concept and increased personal motivation to overcome the conditions which define them as disadvantaged. To what degree all educators can be convinced of the value of career education and be prepared to incorporate appropriate career content into the existing curriculum will determine how quickly and to what extent this barrier can be removed.

Health and social services are required for a comprehensive student counseling program. Potential vocational education students with medical, dental, or associated difficulties must receive corrective treatment prior to the selection of a career and preparation for entry employment. There are some efforts being expended in this area, but it remains a difficult barrier for countless persons. A lack of access to social services can be an even greater barrier to overcome. The person without food, transportation, or housing often lacks the minimum means needed to enroll in a program of vocational education. These basic needs must be met especially for the adult student, prior to the design of an appropriate job training program. The lack of funds for subsistence during the instructional program should not deny anyone a quality vocational education. Removing the economic barriers should be accomplished as an investment in the future earning power of the persons receiving assistance.

The scarcity of education personnel who have adequate training or exposure to equity issues is a major impediment to the continual effort to eradicate barriers. School systems must make tremendous changes if the needs of students are to be met on an individual basis. Persons experiencing barriers to equity share with those persons enrolled in vocational education the negative reputation of taking the program as a "consolation prize" for not qualifying for a college preparatory program. Many elementary teachers, secondary teachers, parents, board of education members, school administrators, and other citizens share belief in the fallacy that a college degree is the best and surest way to occupational success. This erroneous assumption should not and cannot be tolerated as a barrier to equitable access to vocational education.

The image of the vocational school must be positive and based upon its adequate supply of quality vocational education programs and related services. The mistaken and outdated notions harbored by many teachers concerning what

vocational education and skilled work offer a student must be corrected. The teacher and counselor who have a bias about what constitutes traditional employment for males and females, about what constitutes appropriate employment for the handicapped, or about the personal worth of the disadvantaged must be oriented to a more realistic perspective. For effective barrier elimination an adequate supply of vocational educators must be prepared to deliver relevant programs of quality vocational education.

Seminars on various equity issues, dissemination of related information, and visitation of successful programs by staff members can improve sensitivity to equity barriers. Every staff development program should include information on overcoming barriers to equity. The chief administrators and the instructional leaders must be supportive of the goal of eradicating barriers to equity, if staff development programs are to be successful. The administrative staff must serve as advocates of equity and visibly support removal of barriers. The administrator should integrate the pursuit of equity into the contents of staff meetings, individual conferences, and memos so as to demonstrate the attainment of equity as an institutional objective.

Qualified leaders and managers of vocational education are needed to develop and maintain effective job training programs. Managerial leadership is needed at the high school and adult education levels. Vocational education administrators cannot allow the lack of an appropriate delivery system to impede the access to job training programs of anyone needing preparation for an occupation. Contemporary curricula must be developed and maintained in consultation with representatives of employers. Equipment used in places of employment must be available in the learning environment, and employment opportunities must be correlated to the vocational program offered. Arrangements should be made to provide the transitional services needed for successful placement of the person prepared for work along with the appropriate follow-up services to ensure continued employment. Rapport must be developed with employers so that they understand their responsibility of accepting the persons prepared for work as a result of barriers being removed.

Political pressure and laws and regulations have been, and continue to be, a potent force in removing barriers. Advocacy groups have been successful in directing the attention of individuals and groups to the problems of persons not treated equally. It seems, however, that there are more laws and regulations promulgated than are enforced. Perhaps additional attention should be directed toward achieving compliance with existing directives rather than enacting further legislation. To be effective, compliance enforcement efforts need to include

comprehensive programs to explain the value and positive results to be derived from complying with mandates. Maximum success can only be gained by converting the requirements of law into goals for operation. The leverage power of federal and state government is more than adequate for the task, especially when applied in a positive, supportive fashion designed to allow local influence in program operation.

Research and development of possible strategies are vital components of any plan to eradicate barriers and promote equity. It is necessary, however, to coordinate these functions to avoid redundancy and maximize the economical utilization of scarce resources. It seems evident that research on possible solutions to problems is needed to ensure maximum positive results from the current level of resources available. The research needs to be practical and directed toward development of programs that can be utilized in a variety of locations and circumstances. Research that could result in eliminating barriers effectively and efficiently needs to be conducted in all program component areas.

More attention should be given to the function of the job-training program in meeting the needs of the individual rather than to the formality of school operation. Vocational education students, especially adults, should have the prerogative of selective open-entry, open-exit instructional programs depending upon their needs and objectives. New programming is needed based upon competencies that the individual lacks. This new programming could best be utilized in a modular design to facilitate the open-entry, open-exit strategy. Adult students should have vocational education coupled with the work experience necessary to obtain a job, to remain employed, or to prepare for a better job. High school students should have the flexibility of entering and leaving school with transitional services provided at both times. All students are not ready for job training at the same time, nor do they possess the same degree of motivation at a given chronological age. Experiential learning should be incorporated into the instruction program.

With competency-based modular instruction available, school and agency personnel could conduct a community outreach program identifying and recruiting persons who have experienced barriers to equity as potential students of vocational education. It is important to recognize that equality and achievement in school are not incompatible. Creative teaching is needed for all students, not just the academically able, and innovations are needed for all students, not just those who are preparing for college enrollment. Teachers must become involved with encouraging and teaching those students who have not experienced success in school if the students are to continue their instructional program and not drop out

of school. It may even be necessary to accommodate a temporary lack of overall achievement on the part of such students in order to obtain greater equality for them. Inservice education of currently employed teachers and pre-employment preparation of potential teachers must emphasize human relations skills and techniques required for successfully working with all persons needing vocational education. Schools and teacher-education colleges need to coordinate their staff development efforts.

Students need basic skills to function in vocational training programs. Elimination of barriers, provision of vocational education, teaching of job readiness skills, and job placement will not result in continued employment if the student cannot read, write, spell, and compute. Employers expect these basic skills in employees. Vocational educators have helped students to acquire these necessary educational skills, in many instances even before teaching students vocational education. Increased emphasis must be placed on the goal of teaching every young person the basic skills. If the goal is not accomplished in the elementary grades, then it becomes necessary to fund and operate remediation programs in conjunction with the vocational education programs.

One seemingly appropriate strategy must be utilized with caution. Work experience is frequently included in the overall vocational education program. Many students like the activity and desire the income which results. Vocational educators value work experience because it involves the employer with the program, it has proven helpful for some students who did not succeed in other programs, and it increases the number of students the school can educate. Unfortunately, the work experience job tends to be an entry level job including somewhat menial tasks. As a result, the student has a job which provides little opportunity for upward mobility. Working in one of these jobs may be appropriate for a seventeen year-old youth but is totally unsatisfactory for a twenty-four year-old adult who is married and has one or more children. It must be remembered that the work experience job should be a means to an end, and not the end result. Students must have the skill and related knowledge to progress during their careers in keeping with their economic, personal, and occupational goals.

Adult job education in the vocational school is a useful and valuable strategy for correcting the situation of individuals who have experienced barriers and inequity earlier in the instructional program. Adult education programs are more flexible than high school programs. Classes are usually smaller, students are more uniformly motivated, and the environment is relaxing compared to the high school routine. Most youths react well to the high school setting, but for those who do not,

the adult education program is an excellent alternative. Many area vocational center administrators operate the school day and night, twelve months annually. Adults may enter and leave programs in keeping with their needs and accomplishments. The modular instructional concept is followed so that students can enroll in the section of the program needed and leave when it is completed. The adult may reenter for the next module needed. Most of the courses are designed as competency-based and impress the student by being practical. As employment opportunities change or as job requirements are modified, the adult student can return to the area vocational center for updating or retraining. This is an especially valuable characteristic in a rural area where jobs are somewhat scarce. Employers are directly involved and usually provide many of the part-time adult education teachers from their companies. Many area vocational center administrators have established an excellent rapport and communication with representatives of other agencies such as the CETA prime sponsors, Bureaus of Vocational Rehabilitation, and State Employment Services Bureaus. An individual can have a specific adult education program designed which could include English as a second language, adult basic education, career education, job training, and job placement. In this way an individual's needs result in the design of a tailor-made program leading to employment.

## RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES AND SOLUTIONS

1. To put the task in proper perspective, vocational education administrators should realize that barriers to equity in preparation for employment are based on the limitations of the educational insitutions rather than on the limitations of potential students. Consequently, vocational adiministrators should review critically their individual institutions' ability to provide equitable vocational education to those who need it. These reviews should be based on the goal of being more than nondiscriminatory. The criteria for the review should include the degree to which the vocational school incorporates as a part of its institutional strategy, outreach services for persons who have experienced barriers. The review should be appropriate for repeated use by the same school as a periodic evaluation tool.

2. It will be necessary for the state and federal government levels to work in concert with local delivery systems in conducting these reviews of institutional limitations. In some local situations, strong encouragement may be required for complete and accurate reviews to be conducted. For total compliance a means of stringent enforcement and a method of strong sanction will be needed if the review

is to be conducted or utilized effectively. The enforcement procedure cannot feature an option for the withdrawal of funds. Withholding state or federal aid will only deny all students an equitable vocational education. The sanctions should be sophisticated and designed to elicit the most immediate and effective changes possible to maximize the usefulness of such review.

3. It is important to provide special corrective instruction to all vocational education administrators, teachers, and guidance counselors who are involved in formulating preparatory programs for vocational school entry and who evidence a lack of equity barrier sensitivity. Preservice programs for administrators, teachers, and counselors must include such instruction for overt action in minimizing or preferably eradicating equity barriers. Instruction in promoting equity in vocational education for all persons desiring it must be implemented immediately in all programs preparing persons for professional positions in vocational education. Persons responsible for the preparation of the vocational school certificated personnel must develop and convey to their students an appropriate level of awareness coupled with techniques to prevent potential students from experiencing equity barriers.

4. Attention should be directed toward the inservice education programs for existing personnel working with students in vocational schools. These programs must include materials and instruction to help currently employed vocational administrators, teachers, and guidance counselors to reinforce strategies to remove barriers to equity.

5. Vocational education curriculum should be reviewed and refined to ensure an absence of content that promotes barriers for students. The process of examination should be the first step in modifying the curriculum into clusters of capabilities that allow persons to receive needed instruction for employability in keeping with their physical and mental abilities. The curriculum should be competency-based and designed in modules to promote ease of entry and exit in meeting the needs of the student. The flexibility of the curriculum will not weaken the vocational instruction, but instead will enable vocational education administrators to modify some institutional practices which inhibit dynamic programming.

6. New teaching and learning materials need to be developed to facilitate changes in the curriculum. The needs of the vocational students to be educated should dictate the content and structure of the materials. Printed guides and resource books are needed for vocational administrators, teachers, and guidance

counselors. Appropriate technical support should be supplied to ensure proper utilization of the materials.

7. Vocational guidance counseling needs improvement and must expand into additional areas of service. Vocational assessment expertise is needed by every counselor to provide all prospective students in vocational education with accurate career assessment information. Counselors should become adept in using the consultative services of other agencies that can promote the elimination of barriers to equity. Counselors must be a vital part of the education institution's program of outreach to all persons needing preparation for work. Counselors need technical assistance to fulfill their expanded role. Appropriate supportive services should be provided for counselors to enable them to concentrate on advising students and to be involved in meeting the total needs of the student, in cooperation with representatives of the agencies serving the non-instructional requirements of the student.

8. Career education must be expanded to every school system. Every student should enjoy the benefit of having a comprehensive program of career education integrated into their kindergarten through tenth grade curriculum. School districts must invest, with state and federal financial assistance, in a program to help each child select an occupation early in the instructional process. This informed selection will serve as a goal and ensure that educational endeavors have additional and applied meaning. An indirect benefit of the career education program would be the improved orientation of non-vocational teachers who frequently know very little about the diverse kinds of jobs available, especially those that do not require a college degree.

9. New teaching technology and methodology are needed to remove barriers and so better meet the individual needs of students enrolling in vocational education. The same procedures which have worked with existing students will not necessarily function with the new groups of students to be served by vocational educators on an expanded basis. Team teaching, mainstreaming, development of individualized education programs, on-the-job training, work-study, and sheltered workshops are just some of the procedures that need examination and perhaps refinement for continued suitability. Other methods need to be developed to meet the needs of the vocational educator's expanded and diverse clientele. Vocational educators have met the needs of representatives of groups that have experienced barriers to equity, but increased enrollment of persons from these groups dictates a thorough review and appropriate modification of methodology to ensure a continued, contemporary approach.

10. Vocational education facilities and equipment must be supportive of the instructional program. With the eradication of barriers to equity access to and within the instructional facility must be available. Specialized equipment will be necessary and should be provided to meet unique training needs.

An even closer relationship must be developed between the vocational school and employers. For successful employment of all students completing vocational programs, the school representatives must include a cadre of employers in all phases of planning and operation. Students with unique characteristics that may complicate their obtainment of a job should have placement services at the school to interface with employers. These services must include transitional activities by school personnel that facilitate the change from school to work, and even back to school, for updating instruction, followed by a return to work.

All of these strategies and solutions have the common component of requiring a large increase in funding levels. Additional money must be invested in vocational education for the removal of barriers to equity to be successful. In the current and future economy, there will be much competition for governmental and private funding. Given the potential of vocational education to act as a major force in helping individuals to help themselves, it will be necessary for informed representatives to convey the need for additional funds to decision makers. Part of the message should be that high priority should be assigned to the appropriate funding of the vocational education delivery system. It should be made clear that this system is an investment in helping persons who have unique needs and who can secure job placement with this assistance.

## RESEARCH AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EQUITY IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

There is a need for research to be conducted in the development of an institutional self-analysis instrument that can be applied in diagnosing barriers to equity. The design of the instrument should be the result of the input of a variety of involved individuals and groups. There is a need for informed persons without a vested interest in the institution to participate in the review process. The instrument should include a means to inventory the current institutional situation and provide a positive basis for corrective action.

Appropriate policy should be enacted to require adequate sensitivity to barrier removal in the preparatory program of all vocational administrators, teachers, and guidance counselors. Administrators of vocational education programs must have course content added to the college curriculum to prepare them to develop and operate programs free of barriers to equity.

In addition, inservice education programs need to be revised to include information that will halt the perpetuation of the idea that barriers to equity cannot be removed. Included in this policy recommendation is inservice instruction for vocational administrators who are actively striving to develop and conduct educational programs that are devoid of barriers.

Research will be needed to develop new materials and refined curriculum, and innovative teaching techniques will be needed to provide the instructional program appropriate for the unique employment preparation needed by persons taking vocational education. What currently is available should be used as a basic application; however, it would be a serious error to assume that current practices are totally acceptable and to apply them to increased numbers of persons with unique needs.

Policy needs to be implemented to provide career education for every student. All persons deserve to have the information that will enable them to make an informed selection of an occupation, followed by the required preparatory program. Coupled with this policy should be the research required to broaden and refine the assessment procedures and instruments so that additional specific occupations can be included and success can be predicted with greater reliability. The procedures and instruments should be designed to prevent any creation of new barriers to equity.

Research should be conducted to create a plan for implementation of a policy that establishes a positive procedure for distributing funds and securing compliance with the goal of removing all barriers to equity in vocational education. Such a plan should provide positive reinforcement to those area vocational centers which are conducting programs free of barriers. The plan must be equally effective in encouraging those area vocational centers that are reluctant to make the necessary modifications to implement programs. The plan must stand as a powerful sanction against the schools not in compliance, and at the same time be positive in the effort to encourage change. A fiscal policy meeting these criteria would provide great impetus in moving toward equitable vocational education for all.

## SUMMARY

The goal to provide free appropriate public vocational education devoid of equity barriers is challenging and worthy of maximum effort. There have been concerted efforts and significant progress toward the goal of assuring all of the persons needing vocational education that it would be available.

The importance of the goal is so great that a lack of current funding cannot serve as an excuse to stop the quest or effort. Monetary problems cannot be accepted as rationale for perpetuating inequity. As a matter of national interest, fiscal support must be generated to guarantee that all persons have the unquestioned opportunity to enroll in a program of vocational education as they prepare for a job.

The solution to removal of barriers cannot rest solely on employers' preparing their employees, because the expense involved precludes serious consideration by cost-conscious employers. The task for the employer is to work closely with vocational educators as persons acquire the skills and knowledge needed for successful employment in area vocational centers.

With the additional resources available, vocational educators could design programs that are free of inequities to prepare the disadvantaged, handicapped, limited English-speaking persons, racial and ethnic minorities, females, and older individuals for occupations of their informed selection. With the resources required, vocational educators can tailor vocational programs to meet the unique needs of each student which will enable each person to have a greater opportunity for stable employment. For successful removal of barriers to equity, it is necessary to:

- focus awareness on the problems of inequity,
- provide corrective instruction to personnel through programs of preservice and inservice education,
- refine the curriculum,
- develop innovative teaching/learning materials and techniques,
- provide the full complement of vocational guidance services,

- implement comprehensive programs of career education,
- provide the necessary facilities and equipment, and
- fund vocational education at an adequate level.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Before vocational educators can adequately meet the special needs of special groups, they must be committed to a philosophy of equitable education. The issue of equity in education has received a great deal of attention over the last ten years from the legislative, judicial, and academic sectors. As a result of this attention, research and analysis have shown that the term "equity" has a different connotation for nearly everyone who has attempted to define and apply it to educational programs. In addition, a host of related terms such as equality, disparity, and discrimination are a part of the vocational educator's daily vocabulary.

In an attempt to help vocational educators to articulate a definition of equity, the National Center for Research in Vocational Education has commissioned seventeen papers on equity from three broad perspectives—academic, vocational, and special needs. The authors in each of the three groups provide their own perceptions of and experiences with equity in education to bring vocational educators to a better understanding of this complex but timely issue.

The National Center is indebted to these seventeen authors for their contribution to furthering research on equity in vocational education.

We are also indebted to Dr. Judith Gappa, Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs at San Francisco State University for reviewing and synthesizing all seventeen papers. Special thanks also go to Cindy Silvani-Lacey, program associate, for coordinating the papers and to Regina Castle and Beverly Haynes who spent many hours typing manuscripts.

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